GOV. PILLEN HOSTS CEREMONIAL BILL SIGNING CELEBRATING CREATION OF NEW STATE AGENCY

States News Service

May 7, 2025 Wednesday

Copyright 2025 States News Service

Length: 655 words

Byline: States News Service

Dateline: LINCOLN, Neb.

Body

The following information was released by the office of the Governor of Nebraska:

Today, Governor Jim Pillen ceremoniously signed LB317, creating the Nebraska Department of Water, Energy and Environment (DWEE). He was joined in remarks by Senator Tom Brandt, who brought the legislation on the Governor's behalf, as well as Jesse Bradley, who will serve as director of the new agency and Matt Manning, the newly appointed chief water officer for the state.

LB317 combines the Department of Environment and Energy (DEE) and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). One of the significant focuses of the DWEE will be preserving and enhancing the state's water resources.

"Water is our life blood, and our pot of gold is the Ogallala Aquifer," said Gov. Pillen. "In Nebraska, we irrigate millions of acres more than any other state in the nation. When you couple that with the advancements in cattle production and the other industries that are becoming part of our bioeconomy, that's what makes this merger a timely development -- one that is important for future generations."

Sen. Brandt complimented Nebraska farmers and ranchers for being good stewards of their land and raising their crops and animals in the most sustainable way possible. He said the new agency will provide them with additional resources and outreach as well as enhance collaboration when it comes to water planning, state investment in future water-related projects and permitting processes.

"We're cutting red tape, streamlining government and making sure our state works as hard as our farmers do," Brandt added.

At the bill signing, Gov. Pillen introduced Dir. Bradley, who has been serving as interim director of both DEE and DNR. Bradley started at DNR in 2006 as an integrated water management analyst. In 2012, he became head of the Water Planning Division, and two years later, was promoted to deputy director of DNR. He has degrees in environmental geology and hydrogeology and is a licensed professional geologist in Nebraska.

Bradley said he was honored by Gov. Pillen's appointment and looked forward to being the first director of the Nebraska Department of Water, Energy, and Environment. The merger, he continued, will join the best of both agencies in supporting the management of Nebraska's natural resources.

"In accomplishing that objective, we will ensure that Nebraska remains a leader in sustainable natural resources management and that those resources will continue to support our agricultural producers, energy providers, communities, and all Nebraskans for generations to come."

Matt Manning, an engineer with DNR since 2023, will be the DWEE's chief water officer. He currently oversees the planning and development of the Perkins County Canal. Prior to joining DNR, he worked for several engineering firms and founded his own heavy civil construction firm.

"I am excited to work with Governor Pillen, Director Bradley, and our various stakeholders to enhance and protect the state's most important natural resource for all Nebraskans, now and into the future," Manning said.

In addition to the logistics of combining both agencies over the coming months, Dir. Bradley said top priorities would include continued work on the Perkins County Canal as well as engagement with the newly formed Water Quantity and Quality Task Force, slated to gather in June.

"Like the Governor said, we want to take a more proactive approach to these issues," said Dir. Bradley. "We're asking: How can we use the technology that is out there to help producers innovate? How do we educate them about possible options and opportunities and help leverage that into improving our water quality and enhancing our water quantity?"

As gubernatorial appointees, Bradley and Manning will be presented to the Legislature for confirmation. The bill has an emergency clause, with an operational date of July 1, which will align with the beginning of the new fiscal biennium.

Load-Date: May 8, 2025

End of Document